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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Agenda item 55 (*continued*)

Globalization and interdependence

(b) International migration and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871)

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/61/187)

The President: The General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 60/227 of 23 December 2005, will continue the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

I give the floor to Her Excellency the Baroness Royall of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom.

Baroness Royall (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the European Union's statement.

We welcome this High-level Dialogue because we believe that migration, when it is well managed, can be a positive force for development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

It is a statement of fact that all countries — developing and developed alike — use legal migration as a way to fill the gaps in their labour markets. Implemented in the right way, the evidence is clear that the benefits from migration can and do lift people out of poverty. Migrant men and women bring much-needed skills and labour to sending and receiving countries. Remittances can give poor families a stable income, and the migration experience can change attitudes and empower people, particularly women.

The United Kingdom is committed to supporting developing countries' efforts to help poor people benefit from migration. We are doing that in a number of countries already. For example, we work with countries to make remittances cheaper and easier to transfer, and we finance programmes that provide poor migrants in developing countries with services. We are ready to do more.

We believe that the key to success is strong partnerships in development and in migration. The United Kingdom is committed to the country-led approach to development. We believe that developing countries should drive their own development. That is why we would like to see migration policies and actions better integrated into national poverty-reduction strategies. The African Union common position on migration and development urged member States to mainstream migration in that way. We welcome and support that initiative because donors are more likely to get behind countries' efforts to manage migration effectively if it appears in national strategies.

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But, sadly, the migration and development story is not always a positive one. Migrants can be poorly treated. Developing countries lose skilled people, such as doctors, nurses and teachers, and that puts a strain on services. People are also trafficked and smuggled, which puts them at risk of exploitation when they arrive, underlining why irregular migration, without the prospect of a legitimate job at the end of it, does not help migrants or the countries they leave.

We take the risks of migration seriously. International cooperation to reduce those risks is absolutely vital. It requires us to cooperate to encourage the use of legal migration opportunities and to prevent and deal sensibly with irregular and illegal migration and the issue of returns.

One of the most effective ways that we can help to reduce the risks of migration is through the United Kingdom's development programme. Being focused on poverty reduction, our development assistance will be helping to reduce the circumstances that make people feel they have no alternative other than to migrate. But more specifically, we are helping to mitigate the risks in a number of ways, including through programmes that aim to counter the brain drain and programmes that improve the ability of women migrants to access their rights. The United Kingdom also does not actively recruit health professionals from developing countries that do not want to lose their staff.

We see the value of this Dialogue as an opportunity to come together, as States affected in different ways by international migration, to increase our mutual understanding and analysis of the issues in a discussion that is both constructive and positive. We also want to find practical ways and means to implement what we have said and to learn from others' experience.

That is why the United Kingdom supports the proposal that the Dialogue should continue beyond this meeting. There is, in our view, a space for a global forum or group that meets on a regular, voluntary, non-binding and informal basis to build a consensus on the opportunities and challenges that migration presents for development and to share best practice.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paolo Ferrero, Minister of Social Solidarity of Italy.

Mr. Ferrero (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): I wish to thank the General Assembly for having organized this historic international meeting. I hope that it can be a tool for a better understanding of the migration phenomenon, which is a great problem of our times, and for trying to improve coexistence among different cultures, which is a promise for collective security and the safeguarding of peace.

I also wish to confirm that Italy's views are reflected in the concepts expressed earlier in this Hall by the European Union.

Italy, as members know, was for many years a country of emigration. Our emigrants experienced racism. As a Government, we are committed to modifying our national legislation to place at its centre the rights of people and human and social rights, and in particular to end the drama of illegality that many immigrants in our country are experiencing today.

We understand quite clearly that the phenomenon of migration is rooted in the social and economic imbalances of our world, between wealthy and poor nations. At its heart, we find a spark of hope among those who leave their homes to build themselves a better future. In that framework, we wish to strive to strengthen development cooperation in all its aspects by reactivating bilateral, European and Mediterranean cooperation to address the issue.

We are therefore developing training programmes in the countries of origin to confront the criminal organizations that engage in human trafficking. To that end, we are updating our migration legislation in order to promote legal entry into our country and thereby undermine illegal immigration.

Women and children are often the main victims of trafficking in human beings. It is critical to guarantee minors full access to the rights and protections established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We wish to stress that point because we note that it does not yet enjoy the central place in our debate that it deserves.

As to our countries' other policies, the Government has presented two bills to Parliament to make family reunification easier and to reduce to five years the time needed for an immigrant to acquire Italian citizenship. The right to citizenship is fundamental. Another focus is social rights. In Italy all

immigrants, legal and illegal alike, are guaranteed full access to national health care, and all children enjoy the right to go school, thus reducing the dropout rate, one of the most negative phenomena we are currently experiencing. Moreover, we are drafting legislation on immigrants' right to vote in local elections and safeguarding freedom of religion and creed in order to integrate all the various cultural and religious experiences into the social fabric of our country.

In conclusion, migrants are not guests on perpetual probation, but rather new citizens, able to enrich our cultural heritage with elements of their own cultures. First and foremost, they are people seeking to build their own life project. We must therefore work to raise migration out of the realm of illegality and to foster the integration of foreign citizens into our communities.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Mary Wallace, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture of Ireland.

Ms. Wallace (Ireland): I am pleased to represent Ireland today at a United Nations forum which specifically links international migration to the concept of development. I can say from Ireland's perspective that our preparation for this Dialogue has developed and improved our understanding of the synergies between those two areas and provided the impetus for increased contacts and action.

I want at the outset of my remarks to express my appreciation to my fellow countryman, Peter Sutherland, for the work undertaken by him as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for this Dialogue.

I would like to associate myself with the statement made by Ms. Tarja Filatov, Minister of Labour of Finland, on behalf of the European Union.

For Ireland, this theme naturally has a particular resonance. It is no exaggeration to say that migration, and in particular emigration, has been a defining element of Ireland's history and experience in the last 200 years. Perhaps the greatest achievement of our economic policies of recent years is that, for our young people, migration is now a matter of choice rather than the necessity that it once was.

The dramatic growth of our economy in the last decade has resulted in Ireland's experiencing the forces of migration in a completely new way. My country has become a major destination for migrant workers, with an estimated 9 per cent of our working population being non-Irish. Recent preliminary 2006 census results indicated that, in a population of 4.2 million, the number of non-Irish nationals in the State is likely to be roughly 400,000, as compared to 222,000 in 2002.

We greatly value their contribution to Ireland's social and economic development, as well as to our country's cultural diversity. We believe that this migration has benefited migrants themselves and their countries of origin. The substantial increase in migration over a short period of time has posed challenges to the State and necessitated putting in place structures, legislation and systems to manage it.

A sound and transparent legislative framework to manage migration effectively is essential in any developed economy. Recently, the Government of Ireland announced its proposals for new immigration, residence and protection legislation, which represents a radical overhaul of our immigration laws dating back to 1935. That legislation will provide the framework for orderly and managed legal migration into the State. It will set out, in a single code, comprehensive statutory procedures for the application of stated policies in the various stages of the immigration process. We are also developing policies aimed at encouraging people with special qualifications, skills and entrepreneurial abilities to consider Ireland as a permanent destination.

Integration strategies for legal migrants are another vital element in the whole area of people movement. Ireland is committed to enhancing the framework already in place for integration, as well as to ensuring that our migrant population is provided with full legal protection against exploitation, whether in the workplace or elsewhere in society.

We are, however, coming to terms with the reality that Ireland is irrevocably a major multicultural society with over 160 nationalities living and working in the country. The integration of newcomers into that new multicultural society is one of the most important social issues we will face over the next few decades.

A key challenge for this High-level Dialogue is to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize the development benefits of international migration and to minimize its negative impacts. Ireland recognizes that each country is primarily responsible for its own

development, but seeks to support its partner Governments in the developing world in working to reduce poverty and to enable their people to meet their basic needs in health, education and sustainable livelihoods. Ireland is committed to reaching the United Nations official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2012. This year, our aid spending is at its highest level ever not only in terms of volume but also as a percentage of our gross national product (GNP).

This High-level Dialogue cannot ignore the negative impact of migration on development. We recognize the problems encountered when qualified professionals migrate to better-paid jobs in richer countries. The situation has become critical in sub-Saharan Africa, where the health workforce has become seriously depleted. There is clearly a need to take concerted action to address the push-and-pull factors of health worker migration.

A priority of the aid programme of the Government of Ireland is to support partner countries to improve the management and working conditions for health workers in order to encourage them to continue working in their own countries. We also recognize the responsibility of richer countries to manage international recruitment so that skilled health workers are not encouraged to migrate from severely understaffed countries. The Government of Ireland is committed to best practices in recruitment, and we welcome the European Union initiative to develop a code of conduct for ethical recruitment of health workers.

There is increasing recognition of the potential of migrants' remittances to contribute to economic development at the household, local, national and regional levels. Ireland takes the view that work on the development potential of remittances must take place in a context where it is recognized that those remittances are private funds and are not a substitute for national development efforts, comprehensive development strategies or official development aid.

The Secretary-General's report suggests the establishment of a consultative forum that would offer Governments a venue for discussing issues related to international migration and development systematically and comprehensively. Ireland supports the establishment of such a forum, which would be non-bureaucratic, open ended, State owned, consultative and non-decision-making and would provide a framework for continued dialogue on challenges that face all our societies in the areas of migration and development.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Consuelo Rumi, Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration of Spain.

Ms. Rumi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation endorses Finland's remarks on behalf of the European Union delivered at the start of this High-level Dialogue, in which one of the most important phenomena of our time is being discussed. The phenomenon of immigration and its link with development in this interdependent world has a growing impact in the countries of origin and in those of transit and destination. For that reason, the United Nations, where we are all represented, is an especially appropriate and necessary framework for discussion of this matter.

Spain does not forget that for centuries and until very recently it was a country of emigration and that in the past few years it has become one of the main immigrant-receiving countries. The Government of Spain deals with the issue of migration from an open and integral perspective and promotes the planning and implementation of development strategies that deal with the root causes of migratory flows and create opportunities and expectations of a dignified life in the countries of origin. As a result, we consider that migratory policies should serve to maximize the benefits of a legal and organized migration and reduce the inevitable negative consequences for the countries involved, as well as for the migrants and their families. However, that will be possible only through dialogue and cooperation among the countries involved. It will be possibly through shared responsibility in appropriate management of migration flows.

On the other hand, the appropriate integration of immigrants in the country of destination will increase immigrants' capacity to contribute to the development of their country of origin. It must be recalled that better integration requires a clear effort by the countries of destination. They have the responsibility to design programmes for receiving immigrants, providing employment and integrating immigrants into the education system and social life on the basis of promoting equal treatment and non-discrimination.

We must also take into account the benefits of voluntary return programmes. The establishment of mechanisms that make available information about these programmes and their financing could be an incentive for immigrants to return to their country of origin and to contribute towards that country's development.

The Government of Spain will soon approve the first Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration, for 2006-2009, endowed with 2 million euros, and with numerous measures in favour of integration, structured around 12 areas of action: welcoming, education, employment, housing, social services, health, equal treatment, women, youth, participation, public awareness and development.

Spain is also aware that the deep causes of migration are linked to the lack of opportunities in the countries of origin. That is the source of our current efforts in development cooperation, which we know all too well will bear fruit only in the medium term. That effort will enable us to reach the target of 0.5 per cent of our gross domestic product in 2008, thus doubling in four years the Spanish contribution in this field.

The Government of Spain is determined to intensify international cooperation, promoting specific measures for action within the European Union. It is important that all countries involved, both countries of origin and countries of destination, prepare, on the basis of the principle of joint responsibility and management, appropriate measures and programmes of action. This is the path that was undertaken at the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development held in Rabat in July and that we understand marks the path to follow in the future. The Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development held in Madrid, also in July, had a similar outcome and highlighted the need to advance towards an Ibero-American coordination mechanism within the framework of the Ibero-American Conference.

We are convinced that international migration cannot be handled unilaterally. The interests of migrants and their families, and their security and welfare, are at stake. Many human lives are lost tragically in the course of irregular emigration processes, and many human beings suffer as a result of illegal trafficking. There are no immigration policies that can be credible without a major, decisive struggle against clandestine immigration, which is a blight on our time and whose victims are the immigrants themselves, as well as the society that receives them.

The position of the Government of Spain is absolutely firm. During the past few years, it has been reinforcing control measures and developing an effective strategy against clandestine trafficking, including a proposal to provide bilateral and multilateral cooperation, which are truly indispensable in this area. International migration must be addressed in an orderly manner as an extraordinary opportunity for all, with responsibilities that ought to be shared.

To that end, and with the aim of promoting reflection and concerted action on the phenomenon of migration at the global level, Spain has been supporting the dialogue leading to the establishment of the global forum on migration and development proposed by the Secretary-General. Here, I wish to express my Government's appreciation and support for the efforts of Mr. Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In the context of the global forum, a follow-up mechanism could be established in the areas charted by this High-level Dialogue.

Therefore, we hope that this Dialogue will be fruitful and reach significant conclusions that will be beneficial for the international community regarding the actions to be taken in the area of international migration and development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Paolo Barreto, Deputy Minister of Justice of Brazil.

Mr. Barreto (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Around the world, there is practically universal acknowledgement of the importance of migration and of the contributions of migrants to countries of destination. In many nations, immigrants have been essential for economic, social and cultural development. What we now see is a pronounced lack of preparation on the part of Governments, the media and society in addressing this issue. Laws, policies and control strategies are adopted one after another in an attempt to achieve what is now called the governance of migration. Restrictive migration laws have not been effective in containing migratory flows; often indeed they serve as an incentive for the activities of international syndicates specializing in the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking.

The issue of migration governance is generally addressed by way of agreements to fight such syndicates and to tighten visa restrictions, passport controls and airport, maritime and ground security measures. There are discussions about criminalizing irregular immigration and about electronic and biometric identification systems, rigorous visa procedures, data checks and shared mechanisms for rejecting immigrants. Several such measures have been debated and adopted in many countries, with unsatisfactory results. While the number of violations of immigrants' human rights and cases of discrimination, incarceration and punishment increases by the day, the pace of migration continues to accelerate.

There is now talk of strategies to invest in countries of origin, supposedly to help promote development, but actually to help contain migratory flows. By themselves, such strategies will not be effective.

We urge that the issue of migration be addressed in terms of human rights. Our objective is to guarantee for migrants the full exercise of their civil rights. We support globalization and migration policies, dignified treatment of migrants and the fight against all forms of xenophobia. We favour broader international protection for refugees. We believe that the integration of human beings should be the main objective of foreign policies.

Countries have the sovereign right to establish rules governing the entry, stay and exit of foreigners in and from their territory. However, no country is unanswerable to the international community for violating the rights of immigrants. The transnational nature of human rights is firmly established. The criminalization of migrants, mass deportations, discriminatory treatment, denying international protection to refugees and treating migrants as if they had no rights cannot be accepted, even under the pretext of national sovereignty.

Brazil, as current President of the Common Market of the South, is making available to interested delegations a document detailing the significant progress made by our regional bloc in simplifying the movement and regularization of persons while promoting joint action to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking.

Brazil fully supports the proposal of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to establish a global forum on migration and development. We believe that such a forum will be an important way — perhaps the only way — to address the issue of migration in a manner appropriate to today's world.

We also regard as constructive Peter Sutherland's proposal of an informal and inclusive global forum that would examine the links between migration and development from a comprehensive and holistic perspective with a major focus on human rights. We believe that the Global Migration Group should support the operations of such a forum. I also believe that it is essential to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees so that it can tackle the grave problem of persecution in the world in relation to race, nationality, social group, political opinion, conflict and serious human rights violations.

Calm discussion on this issue could open the door to joint, creative, human and just solutions with regard to the phenomenon of migration, which linked our own ancestors together. It is a right that must also be ensured for our descendants.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wieslaw Tarka, Deputy Minister of the Interior and Administration of Poland.

Mr. Tarka (Poland): Poland fully supports the statement delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I should like to make a few additional comments on the issues under discussion as viewed from our perspective.

The recognition of migration policy as a constant component of a country's development and modernization strategy requires that it be based on reliable knowledge of the nature and consequences of migration-related phenomena at both the national and global levels. Therefore, we highly appreciate the initiative of organizing the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. We also agree that today's debate should mark the beginning of an international sharing of experience gained in this field. We expect that it will be a multithematic discussion on the complex issues involved.

I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to his team and to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Peter Sutherland, for their excellent and comprehensive preparation of this meeting.

Although the international aspects of migration-related cooperation are highly significant, its regional dimension is of key importance. Therefore, we express our support for an increase in the activities and the participation of all the regional commissions of the United Nations system with regard to migration and development issues.

It was not long ago that we met at the Euro-African Conference held in Rabat. Its outcome proved that such meetings should also be conducted in other regions, including Eastern Europe, where migration-related issues will, to an ever greater extent, influence the economic and social situation.

Poland is currently formulating the specific components of its migration policy. Historical events clearly show that Poles have been active participants in the migration processes. Our accession into the European Union integrated our country into the global, and primarily European, migration system at a higher level. Globalization processes influencing the migration phenomenon will also have an impact on migration in Poland.

We are not only a country of emigration but have also become a country of immigration. During the last decade, Poland has become a transit and destination country. To an ever greater extent, we have been experiencing the phenomenon of temporary migration. Therefore, we believe that special attention should be given to this particular issue and its challenges.

Owing to our geographical location, Poland is a place of migration mostly for the people from the East — from neighbouring European countries as well as Asian States.

As a result of political changes in the last 15 years, our country has established a legal and institutional system for migration-related issues that is in compliance with European standards. This process is still in progress pursuant to the evolving changes in European Union migration and asylum policy.

Poland has not experienced a mass population influx. However recognizing the importance of migration at the global level, we actively participate in the international discussion on the development benefits resulting from the phenomenon for receiving countries, countries of origin and migrants themselves.

Both our experience and our analysis of our European partners' migration policies support our view that effective migration management is possible and that it should be based on intensive cooperation and partnership among countries of origin, transit and destination. Such cooperation should be led on bilateral, regional, multilateral and global levels. The constructive role of non-governmental organizations and local communities is also to be emphasized.

We are convinced that the most efficient use of the organizational and financial potential of countries, regions, institutions and other partners, will be best achieved by ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication.

It is indispensable to maintain the mechanism of further cooperation among States in the area of migration within the United Nations. Therefore, we appreciate the Secretary-General's initiative aimed at establishing a consultation forum for United Nations Member States which will provide a comprehensive approach to migration- and development-related issues. In our opinion, such a forum is needed. However, it should be established within the framework of existing United Nations structures and in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

This High-level meeting is the first time that the issues of migration and development have been raised at such a high level. I am deeply convinced that we all perceive these questions to be of great importance and worthy of further development, with a view to improving the quality of the global debate on this topic. We are all aware that migration is an always-present phenomenon, and therefore our main task is to find the best way to maximize its benefits and efficiently tackle the challenges it poses. Poland is ready to take an active part and contribute to our common efforts in this domain.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Borda, Vice-Minister of Multilateral Political Affairs of Colombia.

Mr. Borda (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is delighted to see you, Madam President, presiding over our debates and is convinced that, under your leadership, we shall achieve the targets that we have proposed.

Owing to its complexity, international migration is charged by tensions between globalization and national sovereignty, between best practices and worst realities, between unilateral and multilateral positions.

Globalization has turned migration into a cross-cutting matter which is closely related to development, human rights, the struggle against poverty, and the quest for opportunities in an inequitable world, which is why this phenomenon should be addressed at the global and intergovernmental levels.

The global approach fully justifies its treatment in a context as inclusive as the United Nations, as the sole intergovernmental forum of a global nature. Therefore, the convening of this High-level Dialogue is welcome, and we should follow it up with all due consideration.

Colombia considers it advisable to establish regular and ongoing dialogue, which would make it possible achieve a general and comprehensive migration policy, and should lead to specific mandates for the agencies concerned.

There are other intergovernmental institutions whose composition is not universal, and which approach the issue of migration from specific points of view. But, given their characteristics and limitations, these bodies do not approach the migration issue from a comprehensive perspective. For that reason, our dialogue should be broad and inclusive of all migration elements and should at all costs avoid considering a migrant as "unskilled labour on the move", that is, merely as some merchandise required to develop the economy. On the contrary, we should start by thinking about the human dimension of the migrant and respect for his or her fundamental rights.

Regional dialogue on migration matters is useful. We believe that many specific issues could be approached in greater depth in the framework of regional encounters, in order to seek cooperation strategies. Nonetheless, migration is a phenomenon that is not limited to regional dynamics. Therefore, we need to preserve the broad and inclusive framework of the United Nations to assure that its analysis will take account of all aspects of its complex reality as a global phenomenon linked to development.

The High-level Dialogue should be a constructive forum, with flexible mechanisms for fostering understanding, policy agreement and cooperative solidarity, and which encourage thought at the domestic and global levels on the structural causes of migration and the possibilities of development.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on international migration and development (A/60/871). In general terms, we share the approach of the document, which has visualized migration as a multidimensional phenomenon, presenting challenges and opportunities for countries of origin and destination alike, by linking migration to development.

When considering the agendas for migration and development together, we should take into account the prevailing global economic model, which undermines local forms of production and encourages migrant flows to developed countries when the local population has no viable possibility of overcoming poverty or generating wealth, investing or saving.

With the results of the economic model implemented in Latin America to improve living standards, proposals have been made based on a new paradigm of sustained development through the productive use of remittances. It should be noted that remittances are private resources, and therefore they cannot be the subject of government intervention. Their use is determined by the migrant and his immediate family, and the medium- and long-term effects of this mechanism have not been sufficiently evaluated in macroeconomic terms.

In a multilateral context, the concept of "best practices" has been imposed as the model from which international public policy has been slowly built up. Nonetheless, in the field of migration, this model cannot be an excuse for sidestepping the "worst realities" to which migrants are exposed in societies that exploit them or turn their backs on them: xenophobia, discrimination, racism, and the dismissal of the economic and cultural contributions made by migrants to their communities of origin and their destination societies. We should look at the everyday realities of migrants and their problems in order to start the participatory quest for solutions and innovative policies.

A clear understanding of the positive aspects of migration — tolerance, acceptance of the cultural diversity of migrants and their harmonious integration into receiving societies — should form the basis of the first and most important of the so-called best practices.

Finally, my delegation would like to share some thoughts on the phenomenon of migration in general that cause us some concern. I wish to refer here to the

principle of shared responsibility with respect to migration in general.

The principle of shared responsibility was adopted by the international community to address a criminal phenomenon — illicit drugs and their trafficking, as well as related crimes. To apply that principle to migration in general on that same basis would be tantamount to equating migrants with a consignment of illegal drugs such as cocaine. That would contravene fundamental principles in that respect. Migration per se is not a criminal phenomenon. Trafficking in individuals or in drugs is criminal. Therefore shared responsibility in this respect must involve international solidarity vis-à-vis the criminal phenomenon of the illicit trafficking in human beings and related criminal activities.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Leonardo Franco, Vice-Minister for Latin American Affairs of Argentina.

Mr. Franco (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having organized this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

Migrations are an essential part of Argentine history. In the past my country received great numbers of immigrants, mainly from Europe; in recent decades, they have been coming from brotherly South American countries. Argentines, too, have had to leave, as they did for political reasons in the 1970s. We wish publicly to thank other countries for having welcomed our refugees. More recently, for economic reasons, Argentines have also sought better opportunities abroad.

For all those reasons, my country is participating in this High-level Dialogue with great interest, given the very high priority that the Argentine Government attaches to the subject of migration. My country's participation is taking place in a context of regional integration that addresses the subject of migration multilaterally, from a human rights perspective, thus going beyond the traditional view of the issue, which is based exclusively on the interests of the State and its sovereignty.

We have as evidence of this the significant advances achieved through binding agreements within Mercosur and associated countries, which make this new vision a reality for migrants in our region. I should like in particular to draw attention to the consensus agreements reached at the South American Conference on Migration, contained in the 2006 Asunción Declaration.

Argentina, in keeping with its historical tradition in that respect, would like to affirm that the quest for better living conditions elsewhere should not be viewed as blameworthy, much less criminalized. Countries should therefore address the issue by seeking to establish mechanisms for cooperation and integration, assuming a common responsibility in this respect. Such undertakings should be given concrete expression, not just lip service.

Argentina enshrined this new spirit in its migration policy through the 2004 National Law on Migration. That new law reflects the commitment of our country to guaranteeing full respect for the human rights of migrants and their families. It also establishes mechanisms that can facilitate the regularization of migration, thus contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination, xenophobia or racism.

In Argentina, under the new legislation, the right to health care, social assistance and education at all levels is guaranteed, on an equal footing, to all foreigners, whatever their migration status.

As a consequence of the establishment of the Mercosur and Associated States Residence Agreement, signed in San Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, in 2002, Argentina implemented the National Programme on the Normalization of Migratory Documents — known as "Patria Grande" — which reflects a human and social perspective on the subject, benefiting all foreigners born in States members of that bloc. The only conditions for migratory regularization relate to nationality and one's police record, which must be clean.

That programme has made it possible, in the three months of its existence, to regularize more than 250,000 immigrants from South American countries. It is important to note that this programme is not an amnesty programme but a State policy that will apply, from now on, to all nationals of Mercosur and associated States who are currently in Argentina or will arrive at a later date.

The Argentine Government is aware of the relationship between the issue of migration and international security. That is why my country has stated in various forums that it is vital to address those

issues from a rights-based perspective, to ensure that measures adopted to promote international security do not negatively affect respect for fundamental human rights.

Accordingly, the Argentine Republic, while recognizing that the exercise of a State's sovereignty includes control over its borders and the right to decide whom it will admit to its national territory, nonetheless believes that due process should apply in that regard.

Likewise, we believe that internal security is better served by regularizing and providing documents to immigrants who arrive in our country than by marginalizing them or relegating them to anonymity, thereby rendering them defenceless against unscrupulous employers or traffickers and their despicable ways.

Our migratory policy incorporates a gender perspective aimed at ensuring that migrant women can fulfil their important role as agents of development and transmitters of values.

The trafficking of persons is one of the most urgent and serious problems related to the movement of individuals. Reports indicate that the geographical scope of the problem has expanded and that the majority of victims are women and children. International cooperation is indispensable in uncovering and combating the complex transnational networks involved in the trafficking of human beings.

Before concluding, I would like to draw attention to the fact that Argentina has circulated a paper entitled "A paradigm shift: addressing international migration from a human rights perspective" (A/61/315, annex).

In conclusion, we believe that, if they are to succeed, the actions of the international community in the area of migration must me addressed in a comprehensive manner and on a multilateral basis. Argentina reaffirms its determination to participate actively in forums and mechanisms for international cooperation, with a view to promoting new principles for migration based on the ethical consideration of respect for the human rights of migrants. Accordingly, I would like to welcome, on behalf of my country, the Government of Belgium's offer to host the first session of the consultative forum on migration.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joris Demmink, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands.

Mr. Demmink (Netherlands): First of all, let me stress that this High-level Dialogue is a very timely event. As the Secretary-General states in paragraph 7 of his report (A/60/871), "Each of us holds a piece of the migration puzzle but none has the whole picture. It is time to start putting it together".

The Netherlands attaches great importance to this global Dialogue and firmly believes that it should be the beginning, not the end, of a global process of discussion and cooperation. It is only through open and constructive dialogue about the positive and negative aspects of migration and respect for each other's views that States can achieve mutually beneficial cooperation. This concerns both South-North and South-South cooperation, since the problems linked to South-South migration are as important as those linked to South-North migration. Migration should therefore be addressed as a global phenomenon.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union (EU), especially as regards the relationship between migration and the Millennium Development Goals, the brain drain, circular migration, reducing transfer costs for remittances, smuggling and trafficking and the protection of refugees.

There is a clear relationship between migration and development. Migration has both positive and negative consequences for the economic and social development of the country of origin, as well as of the country of destination. Development can therefore influence the need to migrate. The Netherlands annually spends 0.8 per cent of its gross domestic product on the fight against poverty in the world, thereby contributing to the removal of root causes of migration.

Two years ago, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation and her colleague responsible for immigration and integration presented to parliament a joint paper on migration and development. An English version is available in this Hall. In our view, it is a good example of policy coherence. Coherence has to start at home if it is to be effective internationally.

The Netherlands is also a strong advocate of coherence, cooperation and policy coordination among States and between States and international organizations — in our own region, among regions and globally. At the same time, we organize regular

meetings with representatives of migrants' organizations to enable them to provide input for policy formulation.

Countries benefit from managing flows of migrants. Creating migration management capacity can therefore make a major contribution. The Netherlands actively supports projects, especially in Africa, helping immigration agencies and other authorities to register and assist migrants and protect refugees.

Temporary labour migration can have significant advantages for migrants themselves, as well as for their countries of origin and destination. The Netherlands is examining how temporary labour migration from developing countries can serve the interests not only of the Netherlands and of migrants, but of countries of origin as well.

The Netherlands works to promote "brain gain" by encouraging migrants to temporarily return to their countries of origin to contribute to development. Migrants can act as a bridge between countries of origin and destination. For instance, in Ghana we developed a project for the temporary return of Ghanaian doctors who qualified in the Netherlands. Last April, we started a new project for the temporary return of qualified migrants to Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Every country should protect the rights of migrants, particularly women and children, and combat xenophobia and racism. The Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, acting under the mandate of the new Human Rights Council, has a vital role here.

For many women and their families, migration is the all-important step towards a better life — not only because it means more income, but because of the possibilities of empowerment that it offers. But migration also poses risks for women. Migrant women often do work that is dirty, difficult, demeaning and dangerous. Trafficking in persons is the dark underside of globalization, and it must be exposed and rooted out.

It is essential that this Dialogue continue. We call upon the General Assembly at this High-level Dialogue to support the Secretary-General's proposal for a global, informal and voluntary forum in which States can discuss common problems, exchange best practices and find common solutions; the establishment of such a forum is supported by the Global Migration Group and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Peter Sutherland. We warmly welcome Belgium's offer to host the first meeting of the forum. In the meantime, countries will have to continue working together in every conceivable way. This week we have made a good start.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Victor Filistovich, Vice-Minister of Interior of Belarus.

Mr. Filistovich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, I would like to thank the Secretariat for its excellent work in having organized this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

The fact that Member States are participating at such a high level in this forum clearly shows their readiness to cooperate in a productive manner in regulating migration and reducing its negative social effects. It also proves their commitment to protecting the rights and freedoms of migrants and refugees, as well as their willingness to discuss the major challenges of migration and the impact that it has on development throughout the world.

Belarus supports a constructive international dialogue on migration and the need for effective measures to fight trafficking in persons, as well as on other, emerging, challenges that pose a threat to our societies. One concrete example of that support is the initiative of Belarus to establish a global partnership against slavery and trafficking in persons in the twenty-first century.

Belarus believes that the draft resolution it has prepared on improving coordination of efforts against slavery and trafficking in persons will prove to be an important step towards a global partnership framework. Support for that initiative would represent a valuable contribution to fighting an almost forgotten evil that is now posing a growing threat to human civilization. Support for the initiative would also mean making a solid contribution to the common effort of building international peace and security.

Human trafficking will never be eradicated as long as the demand for it continues to increase. In its endeavour to ensure a stronger legal framework to hold accountable those seeking sexual relations with the victims of trafficking, Belarus has organized a high-

level international conference on Fighting the demand for trafficking: ways to improve international cooperation among countries of origin and destination. Belarus will host that conference on 26 and 27 October.

In early 1990s, the process of migration throughout the vast area of the former Soviet Union saw fundamental changes that led to enormous, out-of-control migration flows. That process affected Belarus as well. The timely adoption of a State migration strategy, along with effective legal measures and two State programmes, helped to bring order to chaotic migration and to ensure stability within the country.

Belarus has now ensured that there is adequate migration legislation in place that complies with international standards. We also have a system of efficient legal and social assistance for migrants. Belarus has also established an effective legal regime for refugees and other aliens staying in the country and has taken practical measures to fight illegal migration and human trafficking. There is also a regime in place to cover foreign residents.

Belarus is currently implementing a third State migration programme for 2006-2010. It aims to strengthen State security, promote economic growth and ensure that migrants fully enjoy their legal rights.

The Belarus State migration policy includes the following priorities: utilizing the potential of migration to promote social, economic and demographic development; promoting the social integration of migrants; attempting to stem the outward flow of academics; ensuring free access to job opportunities abroad; and promoting international cooperation in the field of migration.

Given the negative impact of emigration by qualified and prospective professionals on the intellectual potential of the country, Belarus shares the view of the Secretary-General that there is a need to retain qualified professionals in countries that invest in their education and training.

It is undeniable that the challenge of migration has a global dimension today. Migration can therefore be most effectively addressed only on the basis of international solidarity, cooperation and coordinated efforts by all interested parties. At the same time, the immediate impact of migration and the need to tackle it often weigh most heavily upon countries that on their own are unable to implement programmes aimed at regulating migration, creating national asylum systems and confronting illegal migration. Such countries need assistance from the international community to develop effective migration policies and establish national controls and statistical instruments in the area of migration. Developing countries, countries with economies in transition, such as Belarus, and transit countries face similar problems.

Belarus is actively participating in a number of international and subregional forums on migration issues. We are also cooperating closely in this area both with other States and with international organizations. Our cooperation with neighbouring countries is particularly dynamic and productive.

The Republic of Belarus proposed, and is now participating in, the establishment of the Euro-Asian Programme on Forced Displacement and Migration. The programme provides a new mechanism for dialogue and interaction on the basis of the 1996 Geneva Conference on the problems of refugees and displaced persons.

Belarus agrees that there is a need to expand international cooperation and dialogue on migration. We are still considering the proposal to establish a consultative forum on migration. At the same time, we believe that while considering that proposal we need to ensure that existing mechanisms for cooperation are fully utilized, especially the experience and facilities of the International Organization for Migration.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the High-level Dialogue will encourage us to take not one but a number of steps towards our common objective of ensuring global peace and security.

The President: Before we proceed, I would like to inform members that this afternoon, before we continue with our list of speakers, the Chairpersons of the four round tables will present summaries of the deliberations of their respective sessions.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Lazaro, Vice-Minister for Peruvian Communities Abroad of Peru.

Mr. Lazaro (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like first to say that Peru associates itself with the statements delivered yesterday by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Peru is participating in this Dialogue with great interest and expectations, for we believe that the call by the Secretary-General is in line with the major objectives of countries like Peru that have a high number of migrants abroad.

For six years now, my country has been systematically carrying out a policy to provide consular services and protection on the basis of protecting the interests and rights of Peruvians living abroad. Although there has been significant progress, even more challenges remain. The current Government therefore attaches particular importance to the protection of Peruvians abroad. That clearly entails taking steps at the bilateral, subregional, regional, hemispheric and international levels. As an illustration of that tangible commitment, last May Peru hosted the Special International Conference of Developing Countries with Substantial International Migrant Flows. The Conference adopted the Lima Declaration (A/61/91, annex), a document that I am certain will enrich our debates.

We therefore believe that the time is right for the international community to acknowledge the contributions of migration and to consider a renewed and multidimensional focus when putting in place policies that are specific, viable and sustainable. That would be a logical step to take on the path we have embarked upon to jointly address the problems and positive elements of international migration.

Progress has been made along thematic lines thanks to the dedicated work done as part of the Berne Initiative. Progress has also been made on the theoretical and practical fronts thanks to the work of the International Organization for Migration, an organization to which Peru is grateful for its unwavering support for our undertakings in the area of migration. We also take note of the contribution made by the report of the Global Commission on International Migration.

That said, we are faced with a great responsibility. This Dialogue aims at putting in place the cornerstone of an ambitious agenda, namely, undertaking a shared commitment to enhance the positive impact of migration for countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as for migrants themselves. We now need to set into motion the political will of all Member States in order to reach agreement on priorities, approaches and guidelines. Peru is therefore amenable to the proposal of the Secretary-General regarding the establishment of a forum on international migration within a United Nations framework. In that regard, we wish to express our gratitude for the work of Mr. Peter Sutherland.

Mr. Gochie (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In that undertaking we should bear in mind that some of the most up-to-date and advanced know-how regarding migrant protection can be found in countries of origin. In that connection, I should just like to mention two efforts in which my country has recently participated. The first was the decision soon to begin negotiations with Argentina to bilateralize the Common Market of the South Residency Agreement. That agreement is based on a legal principle that already represents significant progress, namely, that residency is based on proof of nationality, and not on employment status. The second example has to do with our recent signing with Chile of a memorandum of understanding on employment, which is based on the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

We have every intention of making this Dialogue a success in addressing international migration and development. We are convinced that, in expressing our views, we will also be able to learn from the lessons and other positive experiences shared here and apply them in our country.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Emilio Giménez Franco, Vice Minister for Economic Affairs and Integration of Paraguay.

Mr. Giménez Franco (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the South American Conference on Migration. I do so in my capacity as representative of the country serving as President Pro Tem and in discharge of the mandate of the Conference.

The Sixth South American Conference on Migration met in Paraguay on 4 and 5 May and issued the Asunción Declaration, which gives clear and balanced expression to the continent's consensus position on migration and development, viewing them as a multidimensional phenomenon of growing complexity. The Asunción Declaration emphasizes the

progress that has been made in migration in the Common Market of the South, the Andean Community and the South American Community of Nations, as well as the unilateral measures adopted by some States in positive response to the necessities of international migration. Such measures include the "Patria Grande" plan to regularize migration, proposed by the Republic of Argentina.

The Conference urged the international community to work on migration policies based on the ethical dimension of respect for the rights of migrants. It proclaimed that migration should be seen as the right of every individual and that the human rights of migrants deserve wholehearted respect, regardless of the migrants' status. Migrant workers and their families should be protected from the acts of racism, xenophobia and discrimination that are ever more frequently seen in certain societies. We in South America believe that promoting social inclusion and tolerance towards migrants and their families can maximize the positive impact of migration.

The Asunción Declaration acknowledges the recent strong feminization of migratory movements. Almost half of current migrants are women, which has a heavy impact on families and the social groups remaining in the countries of origin. Since women migrants suffer two-fold discrimination, both as women and as migrant labourers, greater efforts must be made to protect them, ensuring in particular the rights of women and unaccompanied minors, regardless of their status in the receiving countries.

We firmly assert that migrants are the agents of development. They should be guaranteed access to the labour market, and the receiving countries should acknowledge their professional and academic credentials. This would help to identify the positive aspects of migration, both for the migrants themselves and for the sending and receiving countries.

That connection between migration and development explains the increase in migratory flows. Inequality, social exclusion, lack of opportunity and income gaps stimulate global human mobility. They also have an impact on the countries of origin, which lose their most skilled human resources, whose training puts enormous economic strain on developing countries. In contrast, the receiving countries profit from the highly skilled human resources they host, which reflects the transfer of the public investment in education made by the developing countries to the developed ones. Having lost their best-trained people, the sending countries see their productivity reduced, which in turn has a negative impact on their own development.

For all those reasons, we must deal with the unjustifiable contradiction that, while we promote and practice the free mobility of financial resources through globalization, human mobility suffers from counter-globalization.

The remittances that emigrants send home to their families are private. They must be considered as a phenomenon separate and distinct from official development assistance. We must find the mechanisms to direct those funds towards the development of the societies they are intended for, while ensuring the privacy, confidentiality and security of remittances, as well as the lowest possible cost for such transactions.

Given its multidimensional complexity, the phenomenon of migration is not immune to the activities of transnational organized crime groups. Migration frequently degenerates into violations of human rights. The dream of building a better future for migrants and their families frequently leads to illegal trafficking in migrants, trade in persons and even organ trafficking.

We therefore believe that mechanisms to halt irregular migration should not limit migrants' access to international protection. Migrants of irregular status, and in particular those who have fallen prey to trafficking, should enjoy sufficient guarantees and options from the sending, transit and receiving States in order to be able to regularize their situation, denounce criminals, and have unrestricted access to social services, even if they have migrated illegally.

The United Nations must be more involved in the protection and defence of the rights of migrants. Particular consideration should be given to the situation relating to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted in December 1990. While that instrument came into effect in 2003, only 34 of the 192 countries of the United Nations have ratified it to date. Many countries of our continent are not among the ratifiers. It is a troubling fact that not one of the developed countries has ratified it.

South America is a continent that has always been affected by migration, either as a destination for the

past five centuries or as a place of origin in recent times. The South American Conference on Migration recognizes certain negative effects of migrant flows, but many of those could be mitigated if the countries involved were to promote coordinated and consensual work in the context of the principle of shared responsibility, with a view to counteracting illicit trafficking in migrants, the trade in persons, trafficking in minors and other related crimes, in accordance with current international law.

Given the many years that the countries of our region and the Ibero-American community have been working with the International Organization for Migration, the commitment of that organization to working in full cooperation with the United Nations and its States Members to streamline resources and ensure best practices, and Secretary-General Kofi Annan's concern on this issue, the initiative to create a global forum on migration should provide an opportunity to demonstrate that we can efficiently, effectively and transparently address the challenge of making global migration policies coherent.

To the extent that public policies are adopted to promote co-development in the countries of origin, transit and destination, they will contribute to stabilizing the populations in their respective societies; the costs and benefits of migratory flow will be assumed symmetrically by the countries concerned; migration will be managed in a responsible, egalitarian, secure and respectful way; and social development will ensue in the terms stipulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development and the loftiest principles of international humanitarian law.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Richard Msowoya, Minister of State in the Office of the President Responsible for Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs of Malawi.

Mr. Msowoya (Malawi): At the outset, I would like to associate my delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Let me also express the Government of Malawi's appreciation to the Secretary-General for preparing a comprehensive and illuminating report that highlights the multidimensional aspects of migration and development. The report clearly brings out the strong linkages between migration and development, and it also makes some recommendations that merit the attention and critical consideration of the international community.

Migration generates social, cultural and political consequences that must be carefully considered in order to ensure that it works for both the sending and receiving countries. We therefore welcome this opportunity to share knowledge about how to manage the movement of people.

The globalization of markets, information and technology, as well as the liberalization of many laws affecting individuals' mobility, have enabled vast movements of people on a scale never seen before. And just as they have with globalization, many of our countries have failed to take full advantage of the benefits of increased migration.

Indeed, there are some indisputable advantages of international migration to the development of countries. Those include the dynamic human link between cultures, economies and societies; remittances; skills and know-how accumulation; transfer of technology and institutional knowledge; and inspiring ways of thinking, both socially and politically, among others. However, if those are not properly harnessed, a lot of us stand to lose. That is why we would like to underline the need to carefully design policies that will guarantee that international migration becomes beneficial for the development of the countries of origin and the receiving countries alike.

The report of the Secretary-General states that nearly 200 million people live outside their country of birth, and in 2005 they contributed nearly $250 billion in remittances to their countries of origin. It is now widely acknowledged that remittances are one of the development effects of migration, particularly at the individual or household level. While celebrating the importance of remittances, we need to be reminded that countries of origin certainly lose human capital through the emigration of skilled professionals and unskilled labourers.

In the case of Malawi, for every three doctors trained, two are likely to migrate in search of better prospects. The statistics are worse for registered nurses. For the past five years, Malawi has witnessed the mass exodus of nurses to work in the West. That has seriously hampered the delivery of health services at home.

Brain drain is a serious deterrent to sustainable development. Therefore, there is a serious need for us to work together to come up with strategies at all levels that will ensure that migration benefits all concerned. We call for intensified international cooperation that can benefit the small national economies that are most vulnerable to brain drain, particularly in such crucial sectors as health and education.

Malawi would like to join some delegations that have spoken before to advocate regular and constructive dialogue between countries of origin and destination in order to strengthen cooperation and to identify common solutions, including the allocation of development aid for the eradication of poverty in countries of origin.

The need to explore other opportunities for involving the diaspora in development is of critical importance. In that respect, we would like to acknowledge the Migration for Development in Africa project, spearheaded by the International Organization for Migration and the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals programmes, which have in a modest way brought out the potential of the diaspora in the development of their countries. Those are programmes that must be supported and encouraged.

Furthermore, our Governments need support in their efforts to encourage national expatriates to return to their countries of origin directly through professional and financial incentives, and indirectly by creating legal and institutional frameworks conducive to return.

Malawi is supportive of the Secretary-General's proposal to have a consultative forum that would provide an opportunity to discuss issues relating to international migration and development in a systematic and comprehensive way. We believe that this would ensure the retention of migration and development high on the development agenda of the international community.

Malawi has porous borders. As a transit country, we receive a lot of asylum seekers in genuine need. However, transnational criminal elements have also taken advantage of the situation to launch their criminal activities, including trafficking of women and children. Those are transnational problems that require transnational solutions.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the need to place the effective protection of the economic, social and cultural rights of the migrant at the centre of all migration management systems. It is my delegation's sincere hope that this dialogue will not be an end in itself.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Albert Agosson, Minister Delegate to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Charge of African Integration and the Diaspora of Benin.

Mr. Agosson (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Benin welcomes the positive initiative of the international community to organize this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

Globalization promotes the mobility of the factors of production, including labour. Like other factors, the cross-border mobility of labour must now respond, in the same way as any export commodity, to ever-more stringent standards. That is the lesson that my country, the Republic of Benin, has learned in its fight against unofficial and clandestine migration. In that regard, host countries and countries of origin are called upon to act. As both a sending and receiving country, Benin has suffered the negative consequences of migration, but also benefits from some of its positive aspects.

As most reports note, migration is expected to increase, and there is no indication that it will decrease in the medium term. On the contrary, all factors lead us to believe that not even the newly adopted immigration policies of the northern countries will stem the brain drain.

In addition to the traditional forms that we know and have studied, one type of migration is of particular concern to my Government — that of vulnerable persons, such as women and children, who are subject to trafficking and human trade. Trafficking, exploitation and trade in children are the results of the limitations and failures of the educational system. Such failures include the facts that schooling is not universal; that people with higher education are finding it increasingly difficult to find work, which discourages parents from sending children to school; and that legislation and insufficient enforcement cannot halt the trafficking of children.

As to Benin, an approximate assessment — which we hope to develop in depth — indicates that its

population living and working outside the country stood at about 1 million in 1983 and had risen to almost 3 million by 2005. Of those 3 million, 1.02 per cent chose Europe as a destination and 0.27 per cent chose North America. The vast majority — 98.29 per cent — live in Africa.

The Government of Benin recognizes the importance of international migration and its impact on the country's economy. The number of citizens concerned, the amount of remittances sent by migrants and the tragic experience of migrants who are forced to return attest to the acuteness of the problem for Benin and justify the efforts made to manage the diaspora at the institutional and political levels.

I should now like to focus on the link between the prosperity of our countries — countries of origin — and the brain drain. It is acknowledged that skilled migrants contribute to the economic growth of receiving countries. It has also been observed that skilled migrants are less likely than those with fewer skills to send remittances to their country of origin, perhaps because of the opportunities for integration offered by the receiving country and the stability of employment for highly skilled labour. Be that as it may, the emigration of highly skilled labour represents a direct loss in terms of the development of communities and countries of origin — a loss that, members will agree, is not offset by the remittances periodically sent back. But we must recognize that the weakness of the productive capacities of countries of origin, which does not allow them to hold on to their skilled personnel trained at great expense, is one of the reasons for it.

However, the sending of remittances establishes a direct link between migration and development. Therefore, above and beyond the issue of remittances, we must operationalize existing mechanisms in order to transfer the knowledge of the diaspora to the country of origin. That would increase the contributions made by emigrants to the development of our countries.

With regard to remittances, between 1999 and 2005 Beninese citizens living abroad officially transferred to Benin a total of $698.4 million. If we look at the purposes to which those resources were assigned, we see that, in the absence of an appropriate source of guidance and advice, remittances are used mostly to purchase household goods and property. That highlights the need for a policy to assist and guide migrants so that they will want to invest in their country of origin.

Mindful of the importance of such remittances, Benin calls on the international community to support the Ministerial Declaration of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries on migrant remittances, particularly the initiative to establish a migrant remittance observatory for least developed countries. Here, I wish to reiterate my country's offer to the international community to serve as the headquarters for such an observatory.

Notwithstanding the many legislative and regulatory measures already adopted, the difficulties observed in the management of migration to promote development require that the international community take a number of actions that would be directly in line with the decisions of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in Banjul in July 2006. It should offer children who have been excluded from the formal education system an alternative form of literacy training and education for better subsequent integration into the economic fabric; encourage bilateral agreements between countries of emigration and immigration to protect the rights of migrant workers, particularly the most vulnerable among them; encourage all States to integrate into their development and poverty alleviation strategies coherent migration policies that ensure respect for the internationally recognized rights of migrants; provide technical and financial support to countries of emigration so that they raise the awareness of their populations regarding the conditions prevailing in traditional countries of immigration; improve knowledge about migrant workers' rights in countries of immigration with a view to facilitating respect for those rights; help countries to know more about their diasporas; and promote and strengthen mechanisms to facilitate use of the expertise of diasporas to meet the needs of countries of origin.

Benin is confident that these meetings will enable us to discuss all these issues. Following up on them will require everyone's support for the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a consultative global forum on migration and development issues. The forum will be a special framework for discussion and consultation on the challenges and issues bound up with international migration.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Rosario Graciano de los Santos, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mrs. Graciano de los Santos (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is important for me to participate in this important meeting. International migration is one of the great global phenomena of our time. In today's world, the mobility of people who cross international borders and move to other countries in search of better living conditions is constantly increasing. They are driven by a lack of development — in particular, a lack of jobs and an adequate livelihood, not only for them, but also for their families.

As representatives of Governments, we must play a significant role in formulating and carrying out public policies concerning the positive impact of migration. We must explain the link between migration and development. Understanding and identifying the role of countries — especially countries of immigration — in that regard is the main challenge before us.

The Dominican Republic, as a country that both sends and receives migrants, has witnessed significant changes in migration since the mid-1970s. The increasing proportion of women migrants, the changing perception of Dominicans living abroad and the process of social change in the diaspora itself — caused by the enhanced social standing of second- and third-generation emigrants, whose social, economic and cultural conditions are better than those of their forebears — offer the best possible framework within which to implement policies that reflect those profound changes.

Policies on international migration are a sovereign matter for States, which have national standards for their formulation and execution. However, Governments in all regions of the world are aware that migration must be planned and managed through international coordination and cooperation.

Governments are accordingly making a point of participating in non-binding regional consultative forums bringing together representatives of States, non-governmental organizations and business people, among other actors, to discuss the problem of migration in a cooperative manner, promoting exchanges and the coordination of bilateral and multilateral agreements on international migration.

Our country joins in the efforts of the international community to raise awareness about the dimensions of the phenomenon of migration at the global level. The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development is an appropriate forum in which our countries can discuss new ideas on migration policies aimed at promoting development. Such policies should have both a national and a global focus to enhance regional consultations, which thus far have had very fruitful results for the participating States. We hope that this important meeting will come up with proposals and recommendations that lead countries to improve conditions so that they can meet the challenges posed by migration and take advantage of the opportunities it offers.

I should like to highlight three important initiatives taken recently by the Government of the Dominican Republic in cooperation with other countries of the region.

First is the International Congress on Creating Synergies between Migration and Development, held in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Another is the private sector forum to explore linkages between remittances and development, organized with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), which brought together participants from companies dealing with remittances, microfinance and information and communications technology and regulators and parties offering support for projects.

The third initiative is the Regional Consultation on Migration, Remittances and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized with UNDP, the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and others, and with support from several private-sector companies. Government, business and diaspora groups, non-governmental groups and international organizations representing 13 countries attended, including Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

President Leonel Fernández Reyna of the Dominican Republic delivered an important statement on diaspora issues and remittances, and the meeting adopted a declaration for consideration at this High-level Dialogue.

I am very pleased to make the declaration available to this meeting. We wish to invite those present here to give attention to the proposals in the declaration, and we urge that Governments and international bodies, especially UNDP, use them as a basis for new policies and actions in response to the needs and to the opportunities that we have identified.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Essa Maldoun, Deputy Minister for Labour Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Maldoun (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, we would like to congratulate Ms. Al-Khalifa on her election to head the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We wish her every success in her work and pledge the support of our delegation. I would also like to support the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Migration is a human phenomenon and has existed since time immemorial. Throughout history it has taken different forms, individually and collectively. At the same time, it has basically been a quest for better living conditions, undertaken to meet the economic needs of migrants. Migration has been a melting pot of civilizations and cultures which has often brought together civilizations, cultures and peoples.

We cannot consider migration today without taking into consideration globalization, which has positive and negative aspects. Since the migrant's interest in improving his or her living conditions is what dominates, globalization reflects with great clarity the need to close the gaps left by severe economic inequalities throughout the world. We need international action in order to deal with the core issues of migration, economic development and the fair distribution of wealth.

In order to draw maximum benefit from international migration and achieve collective development, it is necessary to develop a global economic methodology and an international policy that recognizes migration's role in development. To achieve such a methodology, it would be wise not to consider remittances as a substitute for official development assistance (ODA).

It is also necessary to lower the costs of transferring funds and to make sure that remittances are made easily to countries of origin without any type of discrimination whatsoever. Likewise, migrants should be able to transfer retirement pensions without any obstacles created by the tax system of the host countries. It is also vital to provide assistance for remittances to developing countries. Counter-terrorism laws should not be an impediment for transfers of funds that are necessary for development. It is just as necessary not to impose unilateral financial restrictions that would impede such transfers. In this context, the question of partnerships between associations of migrants abroad and the Governments of their countries of origin needs to be studied.

Our region has seen an artificial form of migration that was not dealt with in the Secretary-General's report (A/60/871), albeit that it has a very serious impact. In paragraph 110, the Secretary-General talks about the relationship between migration and development, but does not take into account some important elements, such as displacement. For example, the report does not discuss forced migration, nor the question of the protection of refugees or those who seek asylum.

Illegal migration, as we have seen in our region, particularly among Palestinians under Israeli occupation, has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, now numbering millions. Those people have been forcibly displaced internally, or externally to neighbouring countries.

Syria and other countries in the region have known various forms of migration from neighbouring countries because of the Israeli occupation and the aggressive actions that caused the forced migration of Palestinians. In addition, Syria has welcomed more than 400,000 displaced Syrians from the Israeli-occupied Golan, more than half a million Palestinian refugees and many more Iraqis.

The last form of migration is the temporary migration of more than 200,000 Lebanese, a direct consequence of the latest Israeli aggressions against Lebanon. There is no need to explain to the Assembly the magnitude of the obstacles that such migration creates for the economic and social development of our country and the entire region.

The humanitarian situation that migrants face, considering the diverse types of migration, should be of great interest to the international community, which has adopted a number of international instruments to regulate and maintain the rights of migrants. We believe that the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is the most comprehensive. My country, Syria, which believes that it is necessary to preserve the rights of migrant labour, has become a party to that Convention and to other human rights conventions that regulate human rights for workers.

We have also become a party to six international instruments that come within the United Nations system of human rights conventions. Moreover, combating the illicit trade in persons and human smuggling requires an intensification of efforts on the part of the international community. We believe that the best way to coordinate our actions in this area is through the transfer of technology that can be used to uncover such crimes.

Damascus, which is the oldest capital in the world, has experienced throughout its history 33 different civilizations that have become one, thus making Syria and Syrian society a unique example in history. Syrian society is capable of accepting immigrants and integrating them, and of engaging in a cultural and civilizational dialogue.

Over the past few centuries, Syrian emigrants have made tremendous contributions to the civilization, culture and economy of host countries throughout the world. Those migrants are people who have two countries — the country of destination and the Syrian Arab Republic itself.

We definitely support the content of the report of the Secretary-General. We also believe that discussions on international migration policies should not be based on an economic approach alone. Migration also produces social, cultural and political effects that need to be addressed.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Asgar Alakbarov, Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Alakbarov (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes the convening of this High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development, which will allow us to identify prospects for future international cooperation on migration for years to come.

In Azerbaijan, more than 20 laws and by-laws have been enacted to regulate the migration process, most notably the laws on migration and labour migration. Azerbaijan is a State party to seven basic United Nations legal instruments on the rights of migrants, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its complementary Protocols on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. Those legal instruments laid the foundation for a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and a law on combating trafficking in human beings, which were adopted in 2004 and 2005, respectively. National measures to regulate migration are based on the State Concept of Migration Policy adopted in 2004 and on the State Migration Programme. One of the steps for the implementation of that Programme was the establishment of the Migration Service within the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2005.

Since the restoration of our national independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has seen substantial emigration, so that it may be described as essentially a country of origin for migrants. The reason for that lies in the hardships ensured in the transitional period, further aggravated by the emergence of some one million refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of the occupation of a part of Azerbaijan's territory by Armenia.

In addition, a significant number of our fellow citizens are currently residing and working in many Commonwealth of Independent States countries. The influence of migrants on the social and economic life of the country is undeniable. At the same time, there appears to be a need to develop special tools to encourage the use of remittances for poverty reduction and sustainable development. There is also a need to simplify procedures for transferring funds. Active interaction with financial and other relevant agencies in the countries of destination offers a means of solving this problem.

Permit me to touch upon another urgent issue, namely, protection of the rights of migrants. We cannot but be deeply concerned at the recent increase in the number of manifestations of racism and xenophobia towards migrants. Existing stereotypes of migrants create obstacles to their full integration into society, making for serious social problems. In this regard, I

would like to appeal to the countries of destination to undertake the necessary measures.

Trafficking in human beings is the most dangerous consequence of illegal migration; combating that type of crime should therefore be a priority. A Department to Combat Human Trafficking has accordingly been established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a hotline has been launched with the assistance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and non-governmental organizations, and a shelter for victims of human trafficking is currently near completion.

In order both to address negative aspects of migratory processes and to benefit from their positive potential, an active and efficient partnership is needed between the countries of origin and the countries of destination, as well as close cooperation between Government agencies, the private sector and civil society. Cooperation with relevant international organizations is equally important. In this context, the work of the Global Migration Group is crucial.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the efficient and consistent activities of the International Organization for Migration. I am confident that, in close collaboration with the United Nations, the IOM will contribute significantly to addressing the urgent issues under discussion during this Dialogue.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Ana Eugenia Durán, Vice-Minister of Government and Policy of Costa Rica.

Mrs. Durán (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my statement by reiterating Costa Rica's full support for what has been said by the delegations of South Africa and Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Rio Group, respectively.

In those group statements, the global nature of migration was reiterated, as was the need to address the phenomenon from an equally global perspective. We emphasized the challenges before us and the advantages that together we must turn to best account. The link between migration and development, the impact of globalization, the increasing feminization of migration and the need to address this complex topic in human terms, as well as from a human rights perspective, is a constant that must be emphasized at every opportunity.

My delegation understands that we have been invited to a Dialogue and, accordingly, we hope to benefit not only from the experiences and aspirations we share with one another, but also, and in particular, from the concrete, positive results emanating from this interaction.

I should like to share some data regarding the situation in my country. Before doing so, I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate our brothers from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, who, together with Costa Rica, today are celebrating our Day of Independence.

Although a small and developing country, Costa Rica is ranked by the United Nations Population Division as first among destination countries in Latin America and ninth worldwide. Translated into figures, that means that, in February of this year, 10 per cent of our population were migrants, which explains why the topic is of particular importance to us.

It seems clear that the vast majority of our countries are simultaneously countries of origin, transit and destination. However, there is still a preconceived idea that migration in our time is a North-South phenomenon. Statistics reveal how distant from reality that is.

The phenomenon of South-South migration should also be considered in all of its facets and implications. Accordingly, one of the greatest challenges to a developing country that is mainly a destination country is to take duly into account the increase in demand for basic services to ensure that there will be a life of dignity for the entire population, including the migrant population. That is the greatest challenge facing the developing countries.

As a country committed to the promotion and defence of human rights, Costa Rica is convinced that any migration legislation and policy should protect against all forms of racism and discrimination, squarely oppose xenophobia and promote positive maximization of the benefits of contact between immigrants and local inhabitants.

At the same time, it is clear that the Government must guarantee the security and well-being of its citizens, taking appropriate measures within the rule of law to prevent the entry and residence of foreigners whose criminal backgrounds or illegal behaviour suggest that they might jeopardize security.

This is a difficult balance to strike. To do so, Costa Rica has identified the following three basic aspects among others. The phenomenon of migration should be addressed at the national level by bringing together all the sectors concerned, both positively and negatively, avoiding the temptation of short-term political gains and giving priority to an approach that provides guarantees and has a human face. The international community must take joint action to ensure that migration is orderly and safe and that it respects human rights of all. The international community must provide focal points for cooperation and development, focusing on individuals and ensuring their well-being. Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals is important but insufficient.

This requires a high degree of coordination and cooperation by all sectors at the national and international levels. It also calls for deep knowledge and understanding about the social, economic and institutional repercussions of migration, in both countries of destination and countries of origin and transit.

Finally, any discussion of the issue of migration as well as its causes and consequences in Latin America and the Caribbean should take into account that approximately 90 per cent of the Latin Americans living in extreme poverty live in middle-income countries. The priorities of international cooperation should take this reality into account.

We look forward to the day when we can say that the citizens of all our countries are residing in the place of their free choice with an adequate and dignified standard of living.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. José Mandra, Vice-Minister of the Interior of Mozambique.

Mr. Mandra (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa on behalf of the Group 77 and China.

Migration has now reached unprecedentedly high levels owing to, among other factors, greater access to travel, persistent regional and subregional economic disparities, natural disasters, armed conflicts, political instability and the vulnerability of national borders. Migration is inevitable and unstoppable as long as there is a deep imbalance of development among countries. This should not be viewed as a problem or threat. If well coordinated between countries of origin and destination, it can produce positive effects on the economy and can create jobs and generate profits. In Africa, and in particular in my country, Mozambique, as far as labour is concerned, migration of the work force is a current and historical reality with a direct impact on the economy and society.

The approach to the problem of immigration should bear in mind respect for human rights and dignity, regional and international cooperation and the sharing of responsibilities among countries of origin, transit and destination. The relationship between migration and development cannot be separated. On the one hand, migration enriches the culture and society of host countries, with far-reaching implications for employment and economic growth. On the other hand, however, migration can lead to a brain drain that reduces the active population and qualified work force in the countries of origin.

In addressing the issue of international migration and development, we acknowledge the need to build a broad political consensus concerning the challenges faced by the international community: challenges such as security, organized crime, pressure on resources, development inequalities and imbalances, xenophobia, unemployment and legal differences.

Notwithstanding such issues, as far as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is concerned, free movement of persons through the territory of other countries can be an enabling factor in the regional integration process. Free movement of persons is the most visible way in which ordinary citizens benefit from the building of a community of States. Accordingly, we argue for adopting an incremental approach to problems related to migration, through the adoption of policies within the framework of community organizations aimed at regional integration. These policies would include the management and monitoring of migration, migratory labour, forced displacement, national and international security and stability, crisis prevention and management, conflict resolution, and international and regional cooperation.

On the relationship between migration and development, Mozambique subscribes to the priorities established under the African Common Position aimed

at mitigating poverty, which include agriculture and rural development, good governance, harmonization of economic and social policies, improved protection of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the strengthening of regional, interregional and international cooperation and the promotion of health sector policies.

Recognizing the importance of migration and its consequences for the economic, political, social and cultural life of our continent, Governments took important steps to define a strategic framework for a joint African migration policy. The overall objective of that strategic framework is to encourage African States to integrate migration issues into their national and regional agendas through the development of national migration policies. The framework is intended to address a number of challenges that arise from international migration, including threats to peace and security, mechanisms for the protection of refugees and combating transnational organized crime, development of human resources to mitigate the effects of the brain drain, promotion of regional cooperation and integration, promotion of economic growth and trade through the development of infrastructure and the creation of an environment conducive to the participation of migrants, particularly those in the diasporas, in the development of their countries of origin through the transfer of know-how, savings and remittances.

The President returned to the Chair.

The inputs resulting from this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will encourage the mainstreaming of migration into the development strategies of our countries, regions and continents, through the promotion of coherent and coordinated policies.

The President: I call on Mr. Carlos López, Under-Secretary on Migratory Issues, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador.

Mr. López (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador fully endorses the statements made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

Ecuador is one of a small number of countries that is both a country of origin and a country of destination for migrants. In addition, Ecuador receives displaced persons from other countries, a phenomenon that differs from but is complementary to migration, making it the country with the largest number of refugees in Latin America. This has made it necessary to formulate new political policies and massive economic efforts that, without cooperation from the international community — which is still not enough — cannot succeed.

The shared responsibility between countries of origin and countries of destination in the search for solutions on migratory issues must not disregard the role of transit countries. This will also enhance the struggle against illegal trafficking in humans, which involves resources greater than those of drug trafficking, and will help us tackle the corruption that promotes it and the evil effects of human smuggling.

Ecuador, together with Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela signed the Asuncion Declaration (A/61/86, annex) that emanated from the South American Conference on Migration, which enshrined the principle of shared responsibility.

Ecuador has undertaken actions in cooperation with friendly countries, international organizations, civil society and the public sector, such as voluntary return programmes with the cooperation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the signature of agreements, such as the one signed with Spain to regulate and manage migratory flows. This is a bilateral pilot programme that guarantees secure labour contracts under conditions that are equal for the citizens of both signatories, without intervention of third parties and in accordance with labour-employer norms.

Domestically, the National Plan for Ecuadorians Living Abroad establishes the basis for comprehensively addressing migration issues, in a way that ensures that the State will guarantee the rights of its citizens anywhere in the world and promote their dynamic reintegration into national development efforts. An important experience is the creation of the Working Group on Employment Migration that contributes to the establishment of public policies on migration from the perspective of migrant rights. It includes the participation of civil society, international organizations and public institutions. Furthermore, on 30 August 2006, the President approved the National Plan of Action against kidnapping, illegal trafficking in

migrants, sexual and labour exploitation and other kinds of exploitation and prostitution of women, children and teenagers.

The most vulnerable population — women, children and seniors — faces the destruction of the family environment, suffers the consequences of displacement and the loss of their roots and is susceptible to sexual exploitation, school exclusion and work discrimination. Respect for human rights is the path to the achievement of the Millennium Goals.

One key effect of migration for the Ecuadorian economy is remittances, which have now become our second largest source of income. In that connection, Ecuador has focused its action on reducing the cost of transfers, through agreements signed by the central bank with the participation of a large number of non-official entities, and always taking into account the private nature of those funds. Simultaneously, campaigns to encourage the proper use of remittances in productive projects have been initiated. Due to high migration among developing countries, the question of remittances will become a new area of South-South cooperation.

Migrant associations in receiving countries are focal points to channel the ambitions of citizens living abroad and should become a good mechanism for encouraging intercultural exchange, for adaptation to the environment and for spreading the concept of co-development. That concept should be reflected, essentially, in the transfer of technology from receiving countries to countries of origin and in transfer of the abilities and skills of migrant human resources. Nor must we forget projects that strengthen migrants' ties with their countries of origin through opportunities to invest in their communities.

The principle of sovereignty must not diminish the rights of the migrant, irrespective of their legal status. It should, however, guarantee with tolerance, the peaceful integration of individuals into receiving societies. Regularization of the status of migrants is an objective that benefits both origin and destination countries, as well as migrants themselves, without criminalizing them.

Finally, my country considers that integration programmes should facilitate migration and broaden the concept of the free transit of persons, as well as of goods, services and capital. These are the challenges of this Dialogue: to convert migration into a source of wealth and development and to ensure that migration becomes voluntary, and never forced. In that way, we will meet the expectations that have brought us to this Dialogue, which we hope will continue through the global forum. Here, we thank Belgium for offering to host the forum's first meeting.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable German Espinal, Director-General of Migration of Honduras.

Mr. Espinal (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Honduras welcomes the convening of this High-level Dialogue. Without doubt, it provides an excellent opportunity to address the phenomenon of migration from a holistic and multifaceted perspective, by identifying and defining the elements of the migration agenda, as well as the necessary follow-up machinery. We also wish to say how pleased we are to see you, Madam, elected as President of the General Assembly; we are confident that your diplomatic experience will ensure the success of our proposed objectives.

Today, 15 September, we celebrate the independence of the Central American countries. That is a very fortunate coincidence. Historically, Honduras has been a country of origin for migrants, but it is also located in a transit region and has been a country of destination, receiving populations that have been displaced for labour reasons — displacement explained by high population density — or that sought refuge during the decade of military-political conflict. Despite our limitations, we Hondurans have been able to share solidarity, friendship and hospitality, often flying in the face of the political agenda of the day.

Honduras considers that an effective strategic migration agenda must include basic components such as: respect for labour-related human rights that safeguard the dignity of migrants, particularly the most vulnerable groups — women and children; combating trafficking in humans and rehabilitating its victims; and ensuring the protection of migrants. We call for a holistic vision, that requires increased international cooperation directed towards developing competitiveness and transforming the backwardness in standards of living. That will result in a better life for the entire population.

At the same time, we must recognize the interconnection among labour markets, which involves the sharing of experiences in order to develop innovative proposals that can promote the mobility of

individuals as part of a controlled, safe and transparent migration which uses duration of residency in the destination country as one of its basic criteria. Honduras also would like to reaffirm the need to reform the programmes of international agencies that are directly or indirectly involved with migration.

Without downplaying the conceptual aspects of migration, we believe that in order to address deteriorating social conditions, increased poverty and growing inequity, Latin American societies are considering alternative models of development. Given growing and justified protest by the impoverished majority, the need for structural reforms to achieve more equitable development becomes more evident each day. Social marginalization, corruption and a lack of jobs and opportunity cause a large part of the emigrant population to travel to developed countries.

This underscores the necessity of embracing the principle of shared responsibility, and of continuously strengthening international cooperation in support of emerging migratory processes that promote integration. We draw support from the political will expressed by our heads of State at various summits, notably at the Panama Summit held earlier this year, and we stress the need for programmes promoting the free movement of persons, goods and services.

The outcomes of such initiatives were first applied in the region that includes Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. There, the basic elements of a consensus-based migration policy are being adopted, the result of a search for solutions involving Government efforts, civil society participation and support from international and regional-integration organizations.

The Secretary-General of the Central American Integration System (SICA) calls for and supports that coordination. The SICA secretariat offers technical assistance to develop a technological platform encompassing the migration agenda in the region I just mentioned, as well as other important actions.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is contributing by providing technical assistance at all levels. Forums for dialogue and coordination are being activated within the context of the Regional Conference on Migration and the Central American Commission for Migration. In that environment where initiatives are proposed and formulated, the region has the opportunity to promote and consolidate democracy by supporting comprehensive development through reforms aimed at regional stability. Helping ease crises in countries of origin by providing assistance and permitting relief in the form of migrants' remittances leads to policies of solidarity and hence to an effective medium-term solution and matching commitments by Latin American countries and developed countries.

But if this remittance income is no longer received and if additional migrants are barred from entry, the result would be to exacerbate not only the economic crisis, but also the social and political problems in countries of origin, thereby straining the already deficient capacity of our countries to respond to overpopulation.

We believe that tightening measures to curb the flow of migrants would exacerbate the already critical situation in the region and would threaten the viability of structural reforms that can ensure stability. The measures that have been implemented are signs — both concrete and symbolic — of a rejection of migrants, and, as a real threat to the safety and human rights of migrants, they fuel a broad rejection of such policies.

Let me touch on the process of deciding on and formulating foreign policy. Those aspects ought to be taken into account, as the approach here will determine whether Central America forms strategic alliances to achieve development or encounters conflicting approaches involving further obstacles and hostility that would surely worsen the crisis that characterizes international relations.

Honduras enthusiastically welcomes the proposed establishment of a global forum on international migration, involving the United Nations. This would bring together actors in the sphere of migration and promote the sharing of experiences. We reaffirm the need to strengthen complementary efforts of international cooperation and to enhance mutual benefits.

In conclusion, I recall again that Honduras stands ready to participate in and support activities that will contribute to building the institutional and conceptual framework that is necessary for our region, for the United Nations and for the international community in general, and that will lead to effective cooperation.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Belela Herrera, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay.

Ms. Herrera (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretariat for its work to promote and ensure the success of this High-level Dialogue. Uruguay is firmly committed to its success.

For the Iberian-American countries, the issue of international migration is a priority. It is being addressed as a focal point of the upcoming summit of Ibero-American heads of State, to be held in Montevideo from 3 to 5 November 2006. Uruguay would like to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on international migration and development, Mr. Peter Sutherland, for their contribution to ensuring that the issue of migration is included on the world social agenda.

Uruguay entirely agrees with the Secretary-General that this matter concerns all countries, irrespective of whether they are countries of origin or countries of destination. Many countries are both, and migration issues should thus be a matter for close cooperation between countries of origin and of destination to address migration in all its complexity. In view of the global nature of the issue, it must be addressed multilaterally. Accordingly, Uruguay supports the proposed establishment of a standing forum in the United Nations framework to address the complex issues of migration.

We reaffirm the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and believe that a genuine commitment to them by Member States would diminish the inequities and eliminate the more negative aspects of migration. Through co-development, migration should no longer be a flight forward imposed by poverty. Our country believes that full recognition of the individual human and social rights of migrants and their families is fundamental, and emphasizes the need for full implementation by all Member States of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

In our region, the sixth South American Conference on Migration unanimously endorsed the Declaration of Asuncion in March 2006. It emphasizes a set of guiding principles that are essential when considering the topic. In the context of the States members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), heads of State agreed to sign the intra-MERCOSUR treaty on free residency, which guarantees the rights and mobility of persons from member States of that regional grouping.

In my own country, we have launched a determined strategy to connect with the more than half million Uruguayan emigrants, who account for 13 per cent of our population. In formulating that strategy, we took into account the valuable contributions made by civil society organizations and academia. Civil society has also played a very important role in providing advice to develop the migration law that will be introduced in the Uruguayan parliament in the coming days.

With regard to nationality and citizenship, we have been working to provide proof of Uruguayan citizenship to nationals abroad in order to facilitate the full regularization of their status in their countries of destination. We are also pursuing the necessary legal channels to enable Uruguayans to vote when abroad, this being one of the core elements of linkage.

On the economic and business front, progress has been made in drawing up important agreements with financial institutions in order to make remittances part of the banking system, thereby reducing their cost. We have also established links with Uruguayan groups in order to encourage them to invest their savings and capital in Uruguay, as well as to promote such efforts more broadly in communities in receiving States.

In addressing the various needs and requests of Uruguayans abroad, we are providing access to health services, housing and insurance, all closely linked to the remittance system that has been developed with our central bank at the centre.

In the area of culture, we are developing a set of programmes and measures aimed at strengthening the cultural identity of Uruguayans abroad. They include distance learning, support and promotion of the Spanish language, cultural products, exhibitions of Uruguayan art and artists in the various Uruguayan communities abroad and, in particular, encouraging travel by highly qualified Uruguayans in academic, artistic and business circles. The aim is to give Uruguayans abroad access to the country's rich heritage without their having necessarily to return.

Lastly, our system of linkages implies a new form of citizen participation in the country of origin while residing elsewhere. To this end, we have sought to organize communities abroad, in order that they may

have places to meet for discussions and suggestions with regard to their own problems or those of Uruguayan society at large. We believe that this approach could be a good way to manage migration while respecting human rights and fostering the participation of migrant groups.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm that it is our joint responsibility to ensure that migration results in an enriching cross-cultural experience that ultimately brings about true progress for civilization.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zvonko Zinrajh, State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Interior of Slovenia.

Mr. Zinrajh (Slovenia): With almost 200 million international migrants in the world — and with trends that indicate that those numbers will grow even further in the future and become more widespread than they are at the moment — Slovenia believes it is necessary to enhance dialogue and cooperation between Governments in order to act in a more coherent way.

We are convinced that special attention must be paid to protecting human rights and guaranteeing security. Those are two essential elements in the area of preventing illegal migratory flows, and in particular in combating trafficking in human beings. In that regard, greater emphasis should be placed on a new concept of human security that shifts the focus from security policies mainly concerned with the protection of State territories to those focused on people, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, citizenship or other distinguishing characteristics.

When managed effectively, migration can have a substantially positive impact on both the country of destination and the country of origin, as well as on the migrants themselves. We therefore underline the need for a balanced, global, coherent and comprehensive approach that harnesses the benefits of regular migration, develops policies to address irregular migration and includes cooperation with third countries.

One of the most important elements of holistic migration policies is the link between migration and development. In that regard, more consideration should be given both to how migration issues can be integrated into poverty reduction strategies, and other national development strategies of partner countries, and to how donors can support partners' priorities in that context. That would include policy responses to brain drain and an answer to the question on how to maximize the impact of remittances, which remain private funds and should not be seen as a replacement for official development assistance.

Slovenia also recognizes the need for concrete actions in order to deal efficiently with trafficking in human beings, the smuggling of immigrants and other acute problems. It is becoming evident that, while illegal migratory flows and the accompanying criminal activity can be limited by repressive measures and policing operations, they cannot be entirely curbed or prevented in the long term.

Unfortunately, numerous organized criminal gangs take advantage of the hardships of migrants, using them to generate profits, subjecting them to a relationship of slavery and forcing them into criminal activity. People become victims of the greed of others and are often entirely unprotected, in particular the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children. The fight against human trafficking and the smuggling of immigrants is central to eradicating forced and bonded labour, as well as organized crime. Owing to its specific nature and the conscious violation of the basic human rights of the victims, trafficking in human beings in particular is becoming one of the most important challenges at the global level.

Preventing and suppressing human trafficking calls for various measures, including prevention efforts, providing assistance and protection to victims, criminalizing trafficking activities and organizing awareness-raising programmes. Last, and most important, there is a need to eliminate the root causes of trafficking — such as poverty, social alienation and exclusion, discrimination against women and children and the lack of equal opportunities — and to reduce the high demand in destination countries. Important legal instruments have been adopted at the international level intended to prevent human trafficking. However they have not yet been fully implemented everywhere. We call on Member States to speed up the process of ratification of the international instruments concerned in order for the necessary measures to be implemented in practice.

Slovenia welcomes the purposes and goals of the High-level Dialogue in the search for sustainable solutions to real problems, with the aim of improving

the relationship between development benefits and the negative consequences of international migration.

This is a long process, which requires the consistent implementation of measures at the global level. We believe that high-level dialogue can make a significant contribution to enabling the participating countries and organizations to make migration work better for development, promoting cooperation and fresh approaches, thereby enriching the overall discourse on international migration, improving both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially within the United Nations, and developing more effective migration policies.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gagik Yeganian, Vice-Minister for Territorial Administration of Armenia.

Mr. Yeganian (Armenia) (*spoke in Russian*): This High-level Dialogue is in itself proof that the problem of regulating migration processes has long transcended nations and States and even bilateral and regional cooperation. Today, it is truly a global problem. For Armenia, regulating migration is an issue of strategic importance, since, after independence, our country was forced to confront — among other problems — the challenge of an unprecedented number of displaced persons. Armenia experienced every form of migratory flow, including the consequences of the deportation of more than 360,000 refugees from Azerbaijan to Armenia as a result of the conflict in Karabakh, and the immigration of about 1 million people — about one third of the population — from Armenia.

Given the serious problems caused by such large-scale migratory flows, we must examine the relationship between migration and development as it affects both host countries and countries of origin. This is something that Armenia has done. I believe that many representatives in this Hall are well aware of the contribution that the more than 1 million people who constitute the Armenian diaspora make to the countries where they live. According to studies by independent experts, in the Russian Federation alone — which in recent years has received many people from Armenia — Armenian migrants have created more than 1 million jobs.

Furthermore, remittances from migrant workers and Armenians living abroad have had a significant economic impact in terms of the ability of our country to achieve double-digit economic growth for the past four years. For Armenia, the effect of migration on development processes can be directly linked to remittances as a source of investment in our economy. According to information from the Central Bank, individuals inject annually about $1 billion into Armenia's economy. The majority — 76 per cent — of those funds are spent on consumer goods, only 2 per cent is invested in economic activities. We must therefore, as a matter of urgency, use such funds as a source of investment in the economy.

We are taking the very first steps in this area — the issue is on our agenda for cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development. In this regard, we are very interested in establishing dialogue with other countries and international organizations, especially since a number of European Union countries have been conducting similar programmes with success.

Providing assistance to migrant workers to help them to find legal work is one of the objectives of our discussions at this meeting. Many developed countries are routinely meeting their demand for labour through recourse to migrants from developing countries. Such migrants take jobs which are traditionally considered to be unattractive by the local population, but they also work in other areas, including medical services and information technology.

However, legislation relating to migration in developed countries sometimes automatically makes such people illegal immigrants. I believe that it is high time that we found a way to overcome this problem. I would suggest that, as a first step, host countries provide countries of origin with information regarding the demand for work in their labour markets. Specific governmental organizations that help foreign workers could advise on procedures in this area and on related issues. I am deeply convinced that such cooperation could be an effective alternative means of combating illegal migration.

In the context of migration and development, we attach importance to promoting migrant return. We fully agree with the Secretary-General that the major objective of any migration policy must be to provide all those who want to live and work in their home countries the opportunity to do so.

I would like to inform the Assembly that, for the return of Armenian citizen migrants, we have concluded agreements with three European countries.

completed negotiations with five others and are continuing negotiations with another five. Our experience tells us that, in order to avoid the recycling of irregular migrants, it is necessary to add reintegration programmes when we readmit. We are currently conducting such programmes with the Governments of Switzerland and of France. Furthermore, we are planning to set up a centre that will not only give assistance to returning migrants but also provide them with an opportunity, before they return, to go online directly so as to contact the relevant Government organizations in Armenia and to receive information that is of interest to them.

In many countries throughout the world there is a saying to the effect that a good beginning is half the battle. That axiom is applicable to this meeting, too. We see this as the beginning of a long-term path towards dialogue within the United Nations on migration issues. At the same time, ultimate success in this area will, to a large extent, depend on follow-up. The implementation of any recommendations that come out of these meetings will require institutional capacity, and in our view the International Organization for Migration, which has institutional networks throughout the world, could help to reinforce that mission.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Ndiyoi Mutiti, Chief Immigration Officer of Zambia.

Mrs. Mutiti (Zambia): Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It is a well-known fact that no country in the world has all the skilled human resources needed to turn the wheels of its economy in both the private and public sectors. This has resulted in the cross-crossing of individuals from one country to another in search of greener pastures. Other movements have been caused by political instability.

In the case of Zambia, there are a lot of Zambians who have left the country to offer their services in other countries. The country has lost doctors, nurses, lecturers and teachers to other countries. That has resulted in disproportionate teacher-pupil, lecturer-student, doctor-nurse-patient ratios, thereby producing a negative impact on a workforce stretched to its limits.

On the other hand, Zambia has to some extent relied on skills from outside the country, particularly in fields such as medicine, engineering and accountancy, to mention just a few. The expatriates in Zambia are made up of those seeking greener pastures or who are part of development assistance. It has been noted that the challenges related to migration and development need to be further assessed and addressed in their specific national context.

Zambia has played host to various refugees fleeing from wars, civil strife and political instability in the region. The Zambian Government has allowed some of the refugees to work and, where possible, run businesses. Furthermore, the Zambian Government has entered into agreements with other countries and international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the repatriation of some refugees once it has become safe for them to return to their countries of origin.

The onus is on Member States to deal with matters of migration in a developmental manner that adds value to economies of scale. However, the measures that should be put in place have to ensure protection of human rights in accordance with adopted international human rights conventions for both migrants and the local communities. Migrants are vulnerable to exploitative processes which include forced labour, discrimination, xenophobia and deplorable living conditions. It is important to enhance partnerships with the International Labour Organization through which basic minimum standards in employment and labour are adopted by most Member States.

As we live in a global economy, we must prioritize those issues of migration which will contribute to the development of our national economies through regional integrated processes. These priorities should recognize the experiences of vulnerable groups such as women, youth and children who are easily exposed to exploitative and abusive acts.

In addition to the economic contribution made to development by migrant workers, there is the question

of cultural and linguistic adaptation, for which instruments need to be developed, thus increasing the social obligations of receiving countries.

The question of remittances as a source of economic development in sending countries should be explored within the framework of poverty reduction policies and direct foreign investment. However, earners should not themselves be pushed in that direction as it is probably better for them to build up their wealth in the host country. Currently, remittances transferred through informal operations or hand-carried are not necessarily captured by reporting systems. Therefore, there is need to bridge the gap between estimates and real figures. It had been thought that households receiving remittances would invest them productively, thus creating new economic opportunities at home. However, studies show that they are being used for consumption.

In addition, migrants are not isolated from pandemics such as natural calamities and HIV/AIDS. National efforts to contain such scourges should also address the plight of migrants, particularly those in employment.

In conclusion, I wish to endorse what other speakers have said about the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach in the implementation of migration policies and delivery of services. All nations must realize the potential of migration as a force for development and ensure the protection of rights of all migrants. It is our hope that the High-level Dialogue will pave the way for further debate on this important issue within a multilateral context. That will enable Member States, civil society and indeed other stakeholders to deliberate, exchange ideas and strengthen international cooperation on all aspects of migration and development.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.